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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Monahan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed a concurrent resolution of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. Con. Res. 106. Concurrent resolution to correct the enrollment of H.R. 3525.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member except the majority leader, the minority leader or the minority whip limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) for 5 minutes.

URGING HOUSE REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP TO GIVE PRESCRIPTION DRUG LEGISLATION THE TIME IT DESERVES

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, there are less than 65 legislative days in the calendar, and we have not dealt with one of the most important concerns: the issue of prescription drugs. Our seniors should not have to make a choice between paying rent or buying food and purchasing their prescription drugs.

In the 1960s, we stepped up to the plate and provided medical coverage for those over 65 years of age. The Congress passed and President Johnson signed the Medicare program in 1965. The program has grown, and now over

40 million seniors are a part of Medicare. It is a good, solid program which provides basic medical care, but it has not kept up with new medical developments.

Since 1965, a lot has changed in how we treat patients. Today if we were designing the medical care system for those over 65, prescription drugs would be an integral part of the whole. We have not adapted Medicare to modern medicine. Many of the chronic illnesses in our senior population can be treated effectively with new drugs which have been recently developed.

A prescription drug component to Medicare must have several key provisions:

- No. 1, it must be available to all of those covered by Medicare;
- No. 2, it must be affordable;
- No. 3, it must be voluntary;
- No. 4, a reasonable premium must be charged;

And No. 5, it must cover basic prescription drug needs.

Unfortunately, our Republican friends have proposed a proposal and a program which only covers 6 percent of the senior population. This is nothing more than a Band-Aid for a serious medical crisis. We must act to provide comprehensive coverage for all who want it, and we must do so now.

The other important action we must take is to eliminate the price discrimination in prescription drugs. The Prescription Drug Fairness Act does that. Today, an uninsured senior pays far more than an HMO for his or her prescription drugs. In a recent survey in my congressional district in northern New Mexico, uninsured seniors paid 115 percent more for their prescription drugs than large purchasers pay. That is more than double the price for uninsured seniors.

These big drug companies have set up a two-tiered system of pricing. The uninsured senior gets the higher-priced drugs, while the large corporate pur-

chasers, like HMOs, get a preferred customer price, a lower price.

To be fair, we must eliminate price discrimination. The Prescription Drug Fairness Act does just that. If any customer is charged a preferred customer price, then all customers are entitled to purchase at that price. This simple legislative solution would substantially reduce the price of prescription drugs, and we must pass this piece of legislation.

Just several words on our approach to passing prescription drug legislation. We cannot pass this legislation in a couple of hours. We must dedicate significant committee and floor time to find a bipartisan solution. Ramming a bill through the House in a couple of hours and then blaming the Senate for not acting is not responsible legislating.

I urge the Republican leadership to give this legislation the time it deserves, and to allow the Democrats the opportunity to fully participate in the legislative process.

RECOGNITION OF TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to bring to the attention of my colleagues several distinguished teachers from the Third Congressional District of Texas. I am pleased to recognize these recipients of the Teacher of the Year Award who enable our students to understand and learn from each other, and strive to achieve their goals.

Mr. Speaker, great teachers nurture our country's best hope for tomorrow: our children. Children may be a fraction of our society, but they are 100

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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